



NORTH TEXAS ALLERGY & ASTHMA ASSOCIATES

PREBYTERIAN OFFICE

Professional Building 2
8220 Walnut Hill Lane, Suite 101
Dallas, TX 75231
Tel: (214) 369-1901
Fax: (214) 369-1905

BAYLOR OFFICE

Medical Pavilion 1
4708 Alliance Blvd, Suite 610
Plano, TX 75093
Tel: (972) 596-4383
Fax: (972) 596-4325

Web: www.texasallergyonline.com

ALLERGY EYES (ALLERGIC CONJUNCTIVITIS)

What is allergic conjunctivitis?

Allergic conjunctivitis is an allergic reaction on the surface of the eye. It is a very common condition that occurs when your eyes come in contact with allergy-causing substances (allergens) like pollen, cat dander, and/or dust mite.

How does it occur?

The allergens may be in the air, such as smoke or plant pollen. Or they might be on your hands and get into your eyes when you touch your eyes. When your eyes are repeatedly exposed to allergens, the body reacts and produces antibodies. When allergens in the air contact antibodies on the eye, an allergic reaction begins. Cells in the eye release chemicals, including histamine. These chemicals cause the symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms are:

- itching
- watery discharge
- redness
- swelling

Sometimes skin around the eyes becomes red and scaly. Both eyes can be affected unless just one eye came into contact with the allergen, as might happen with poison ivy.

How is it diagnosed?

We will ask you about your symptoms and check your eyes. Your family medical history may also be helpful. We may also test you for reactions to specific allergens if you have a severe case of conjunctivitis.

How is it treated?

The first choice for treatment is to avoid the allergy-causing substance(s). The second choice is medication. There are very effective medications available for the treatment of symptoms related to allergic conjunctivitis. Since they often require a prescription, you will need to speak to the doctor.

How long will the effects last?

The symptoms of allergic conjunctivitis typically last as long as the allergen is around, whether it's spring pollen or cat dander in a carpet. If you started having allergic reactions when you were a child and have continued to have them as an adult, you may have them the rest of your life. Anybody, however, may develop an allergy, including allergic conjunctivitis, at any time in his or her life. Sometimes an eye infection (bacterial conjunctivitis) develops in addition to the allergic conjunctivitis. This may happen because bacteria got into your eyes when you scratched or rubbed them.

How can I help prevent allergic conjunctivitis?

Often there is no absolute way to prevent allergic conjunctivitis. You can try to lessen your symptoms by limiting your exposure to allergens. For example, avoid going outside when pollen counts are high or when the wind is blowing allergens through the air. Use air conditioning rather than opening windows. Avoid using attic fans. Consider finding a new home for a suspected pet. If your symptoms are severe, you may need to have tests to see what you are allergic to. Knowing what you are allergic to may be helpful to your doctor in determining a treatment plan.